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ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with the counselor's impact on career education in the elementary school. It stresses the importance of career education in contemporary society. Career development is enhanced by career education, which in this paper means organizing the basic subjects, K-12, around the theme of career opportunities and requirements in the world of work. Some goals of career education include: (1) making education relevant to the individual; (2) assuring the opportunity for the individual to gain marketable skills; (3) increasing options upon departure from public education, and (4) utilizing community resources. Elementary school counselors must involve themselves in career education through career awareness, including a knowledge of the self and of the work world. Elementary children are in the process of defining and formulating vocational values and choices. Career education and guidance is necessary to aid them in skills, interests, and attitudes. (Author/WS)

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"Focus on the Learner"

Counselor Impact on Career Education in the Elementary School

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One of the largest problems that our society faces involves employment -- unemployment, under-employment, and unhappy employment. How many people do you know, who, if they had their careers to replan, would do something different? A large percentage of the adult population in our country voices dissatisfaction in their work, but few are willing to take the risks involved in changing. Menninger commented back in 1942 that perhaps as many as three-fourths of the patients who visit psychiatrists are suffering from either an incapacitating dissatisfaction in their work or their inability to work. If this were the situation 30 years ago, one can speculate the enormity of this problem in our complex society of today. The area of career development is a crucial concern of contemporary society, and career development involves education.

To portray the impact of counselors on career education in the elementary school, I offer the following analogy.

We can think of career education at <u>all</u> levels -- birth to death -- as a child being born. We as elementary counselors, must be prepared to nurture this infant because it is ours.

As I view this situation, I see several alternatives for us. One, we could sit around and deny the pregnancy making no

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plans for the up-coming event. Career Education is coming to our public schools just as surely as a baby is going to be born. So rather than use denial and have all the last minute, slipshod, hurry and scurry -- we need to accept the fact that it is coming and start our preparations. Two, we can reject the child. We can say, "Career Education, we did not ask for you, we do not have time for you, and we do not want you." Since Career Education is a healthy, popular child, chances are that if we choose this alternative of rejection, some other parent such as Business, Labor, Industrial, Administration, Curriculum Consultant, etc. will adopt and love our child, Career Education, as its own. Three, we could choose an indifferent approach where we would say, "OK, Career Education, you're here. So what?" and proceed to ignore the issue. This, too, will probably result in someone else taking our place as parent. Fourth and lastly, we could react to the news of the coming of Career Education in a happy, excited, enthusiastic way. We could welcome the opportunity to rear this child and nourish it with tender, loving care, so that as it grows and matures it will become a primary help for society.

Federal emphasis on career education.

Dr. Sidney P. Marland, U.S. Commissioner of Education, in his speech before the National Association of Secondary School Principals in Houston, Texas, on January 23, 1971, stated that career education "will be one of the very few major emphases of

the U.S. Office, priority areas in which we intend to place maximum weight of our concentrated resources to effect a thorough and permanent improvement." Funding of programs is a problem for most of us in education, but money is being made available at federal, state, and local levels to create, implement, and evaluate career education programs.

What is career education?

Career education is a total educational program which focuses on careers, begins in kindergarten if not earlier and continues through the adult years. For elementary and secondary education career education means organizing the basic subjects, K-12, around the theme of career opportunities and requirements in the world at work. The overall goal of career education as stated by the U.S. Office of Education in July, 1971 is "to insure that all children and youth leave school with skills sufficient to obtain employment, pursue further career training, or enter higher levels of education."

Career development does not start suddenly during the sophomore year of high school. The learner has been learning since birth about himself, his self-worth, his abilities and interests. He has also been watching workers and listening to them. He has acquired important attitudes regarding work in general and various workers in specific.

Students usually do not have to make decisions about courses, educational tracts, or occupations until adolescence. An

assumption frequently made is that no important vocational experiences have occurred before this time, but the degree of vocational maturity present during the adolescent period is the product of pre-adolescent experiences.

Goals of career education.

Perhaps the list of goals of career education as presented in draft form by the U.S. Office (July, 1971) will aid you, the counselor, in understanding why you are the parent of this program.

1. "To make all education subject matter more meaningful and relevant to the individual through restructuring and focusing it around a career development theme."

This entails major curricular changes. One of the loud cries from students of all ages is the fact that so much of what they are taught makes little or no sense. They do not see how much of the material covered will ever benefit them. Just pause a minute and reflect on the teaching-learning process in your school. Many of our schools, and maybe yours is included, concentrate on the content of education. This class must finish this science text book, this reading text, etc. in this period of time. Or this class must study American history from the Civil War through contemporary events regardless. Course Content is not the sacred god that it is often made to be. We are dealing always first and foremost with human beings -- in our case with children. It is up to us counselors to redirect attention to children and their needs over and above course content.

2. "To provide all persons the guidance, counseling, and instruction needed to develop their self-awareness and self-direction; to expand their occupational awareness and aspirations; and to develop appropriate attitudes about the personal and social significance of work."

The first step in career development is awareness -- both of self and work. As counselors much of our job entails helping children become aware of their strengths and weaknesses, their attitudes, interests, feelings, and aspirations. All of this is necessary for adequate career development. Children also have to become aware of the many types of work that exist and why we need them. According to the U.S. Office, with career education, the purpose of all education is to increase the student's self-awareness, awareness of others, self direction, occupational awareness and aspirations. All teachers, counselors, and administrators should accept and work toward these objectives. The entire community can become the students' classroom.

3. "To assure the opportunity for all persons to gain an entry level marketable skill prior to their leaving school."

When third graders were asked, "When and where do you learn to be a doctor, fireman, service station attendant, etc." they answered, "in Junior High." Many fifth graders thought that one learned these jobs in high school. The truth is, that in our system as it exists today, students have a difficult time

finding a job even when they have high school educations. Students who drop out prior to high school face an almost impossible task of finding employment. It is felt by many that were education more relevant, more person-oriented instead of so content-conscious, more students (hopefully all) would have entry level marketable skills when they leave school -- regardless of when.

> 4. "To prepare all persons completing secondary school with the knowledge and skills necessary to pursue further education or to become employed."

For the students who do complete high school, two options should exist. They should be able to either continue their educations or find immediate employment. Presently, high school graduates have a difficult time finding employment. Some of the difficulty arises because of inadequate skill development. Career education can reduce this problem.

> 5. "To provide services for placing every person in the next step in his development whether it be employment or further education."

School systems would provide not only testing and counseling for the college-bound, helping them find the best school to meet each individual's needs, gain acceptance to that school, etc., but would also provide a placement service to assist all students desiring to find employment upon leaving or graduating from high school. Many schools today provide extensive help for those students continuing their educations, but few

provide comparable services for those planning not to continue their formal educations.

6. "To build into the educational system greater utilization and coordination of all community resources."

Perhaps you here in Kentucky are more fortunate than we in Missouri, but we are having serious educational financial difficulties. The property tax is a major source of revenue for schools, and the public has to approve all property tax increases by a two-thirds majority vote. Consequently, many school districts in our state are having difficulties gaining voter approval for the necessary funds. It is my opinion (I think this opinion is shared by at least some other educators in our state) that many of our problems exist because of the old philosophy of basically keeping parents out of the schools. We allow them to come for parent-teacher conferences and P.T.A. meetings, but we rarely include them in other ways at other times. We as educators have, in many cases, set ourselves up as the "authorities" of education and turned deaf ears and closed doors to the public. Now we are facing the consequences of our lack of communication and consideration in the form of reduced and crippling budgets.

Career education involves the total community in planning and implementing the educational program. Instead of educators making all of the decisions and excluding the public, the public becomes very active participants. Business, industry, labor and education all work together to achieve common goals.

Already career education has had unprecedented endorsements from each of these segments of the work world. The public is ready and willing to participate if we only will give them the opportunity. I strongly believe that it will be by sharing, listening, and working together -- educators and public -- that we will be able to serve our rapidly changing society. I also think that the most logical person in the school system to promote this openness, sharing, and communicating is you -- the counselor.

7. "To increase the educational and occupational options available to all persons through a flexible educational system which facilitates entrance and re-entry either into the world of work or the educational system."

This last goal suggests that this system would pre-empt dropping out. Not everyone does or should stay in school through grade twelve. Some individuals would probably have done much better during their last few years of high school if they had been able to temporarily leave school and gain different experiences and then perhaps return to school. But, at this point our system makes this almost impossible. Perhaps you have known students who were restless and unhappy and upon high school graduation have either enlisted in a branch of the service or married, stayed out of the world of education, and later returned to continue successfully and happily their educations. Career education does not encourage

individuals achieving lesser amounts of education but instead encourages a relevant and flexible system to meet the varying needs of the individuals we serve.

Establish content and purpose of guidance programs.

It becomes necessary at this point for you counselors to establish the content and purpose of each of your guidance programs. We have discussed at length over the years the role and function of the counselor frequently neglecting to consider first, the purpose of our guidance programs and secondly, the content of such programs. Career development education provides a method for organizing the content of our programs which might be conceptualized as: self-development of each individual over the entire life span through education, work, and leisure.

Career development as framework for guidance program.

Career guidance is the structured program and activities that you, the counselor, carry on to facilitate career development. One might ask, "Why use career development as a framework for a guidance program?" Some responses to this query might include:

1. Career guidance is a person-oriented approach and those of us in guidance and counseling are concerned about persons.
2. Career guidance is relevant. It integrates materials, experiences, information, feelings, attitudes, etc. in a logical, meaningful way.

3. Career guidance is personalized and individualized.

4. Career guidance provides a framework for accountability. Objectives are formulated, processes activated and results evaluated.

5. Career guidance is developmental. Most of us have heard the developmental aspects of guidance and counseling emphasized in our training programs, but many of us have had difficulties in learning how to use a developmental or preventive approach (as opposed to a crisis orientation) in our guidance programs.

What kind of a person is produced in a career guidance program?

Dr. Norman Gysbers (October 4, 1971) presented a model of the career conscious individual that I would like to share with you. Contrasting the career conscious person with the career apathetic person in the following areas one can observe these results:

	Career Apathetic	Career Conscious
1. work task	Unpleasant	Challenge (not always pleasant)
2. education	Required - must live through it	Preparation for life and appreciation of learning
3. work place	A place to put in time	A place where one achieves
4. self	Student as object to be manipulated	Student as unique person with some control
5. peers	To compete with and guard against	Appreciate need for interdependency

Career development includes self-development and this means that all students, regardless of grade, age, future plans, background, etc. need career guidance.

What is included in the content of a career guidance program?

The content of such a program involves knowledge about 1) self, 2) work world, and 3) career plan. At the elementary level the first two areas -- self and work world knowledge -- are emphasized although these contribute to and interact with the third area-career plan.

Self. There are numerous activities in which the elementary counselor can become involved with the children to increase their awareness of self and knowledge about their selves.

(1) Sociometric data can be extremely useful for children, teachers, and counselors in learning about children's perceptions of each other which can, in turn, help them learn about themselves.

(2) Self-concept scales. These are devices that can be used by counselors to help children learn about themselves. There are standardized instruments available or counselors may prefer to develop their own.

(3) Guess-Who or Class Play techniques -- again these are techniques appropriate for children and aid them in gaining self-awareness.

(4) Autobiographies, stories that each child writes about his own life shed much light on the understanding of and feeling about his "self."

(5) Individual and/or group counseling. This is probably one of the most widely used of the many tools available to the counselor.

These are but a few of the avenues that the counselor can utilize in promoting development of self at the elementary level.

Work World. Adolescents' career options are limited by their knowledge of occupations. We must help children learn about the world of work to broaden their choice of alternatives. I recently developed an individual instrument, the Career Concepts Inventory (CCI) to measure the development of children's career concepts.

After testing 225 children, preschool through grade five, from three geographic locations -- urban, suburban, and rural -- some interesting information was discovered, and I would like to share some of that with you now.

The first question of interest might be what do children know about their parents' work? The children tested appeared to learn first, what their parents wear to work; second, what their parents are (job title); third, what their parents do (job activities); and last, the level of education their parents have attained. In general they know more about the work of their mothers than their fathers. Even by fifth grade, however, not all children could answer the eight questions regarding parents' work.

How many and what kinds of occupations can children list? Preschool children usually list one or two occupations, but some can list none. First graders list an average of five or six occupations; third graders between 10 and 15; and fifth graders average between 18 and 20. Most of the occupations listed are classified professional, technical, and managerial followed by services, and then clerical and sales. Research has previously shown that both teachers and children's reading texts over-emphasize professional and service occupations. Perhaps the influence of the texts and teachers is reflected also in these results.

What do children know about specific occupations regarding the following areas:

(a) Job title -- of the 14 occupations analyzed almost all preschool children responded correctly first to doctor, policeman, and fireman. First graders added teacher and farmer to the list of known occupational titles. Third graders added judge, banker, pilot, and secretary while fifth graders added sales clerk, carpenter, and miner to the growing list of familiar occupational titles. The greatest difficulty was met by all children in discriminating service station attendant and auto-mechanic.

(b) Job activities -- preschoolers knew very little about job activities with the exceptions of those of the doctor and fireman. Improvement occurred with increasing grade level,

but the rate of improvement slowed after third grade. Even the fifth graders were unable to give high level, knowledgable responses for most of the occupations represented. These children apparently were not acquiring much knowledge regarding these occupational activities beyond third grade.

(c) Job training -- the conclusion reached after analyzing the responses to this question is that these children, regardless of location or grade level, did not have accurate information regarding the training and educational requirements for the occupations represented with the exception of doctor. Many pupils replied with the trade school certificate as necessary for entry into an occupation, and later when asked what a trade school is (on the VV), they had no idea. A large number of children stated that only a high school education is needed to become a member of almost any occupation. Knowledge of job training was one of the least developed areas in the vocational development of children investigated by the CCI.

(d) Economic status associated with the occupation -- economic status was investigated by the house assignment task and by the general economic status question, both parts of the Occupational Picture Sorting section. Preschool children and first graders did not make the connection of occupation-income-status-housing. The third and fifth grade children showed a budding understanding of the economic relationship of occupation to status and living quarters, but there was still variation in

this area at the fifth grade level.

(e) Sex of the workers in the occupation -- young children associated most occupations with males only. This tendency diminished with increasing grade level until by third grade children seem to have had a fairly accurate perception of the sex of workers in the different occupations.

(f) Child's desire of the occupation -- the elimination process begins even earlier than prior research has indicated. Even preschoolers were eliminating jobs, many of which they knew very little if anything about, and children eliminated more occupations with increasing age.

(g) Child's estimation of his possibility of doing the job -- children seem to think they can do anything that they decide they want to do, and they think they can do many things that they do not even want to do. As the elimination process mentioned above takes place (child does not want to do that job), the percentage of "could be" answers also decreases, but this decrease is not as rapid to the "could be" question as to the "would like to be" question.

Can children perceive similarities and differences among various occupations? Children perceived similarities and differences among various occupations and this task appeared to be developmental in nature. Some of the preschoolers had difficulty understanding what was being asked of them. These children apparently had not mastered the concepts of alike

and different, but by first grade the instructions were clear to most of the children.

Can children detect pictorial occupational absurdities? Children detected pictorial occupational absurdities with increasing proficiency at successive grade levels.

What is the extent of children's vocational vocabularies? These children's understanding of many vocationally oriented concepts was somewhat superficial. The preschool children gave low level responses for the terms work and play and did best with the term job. First graders gave improved definitions for these three terms and added college to the list of familiar words. Third graders continued the pattern of the two previous grade levels and added salary and overtime to the list of acquired terms. By fifth grade the terms unemployment, interests, business school, and diploma were familiar, at least at a low level of understanding, to over one-half of the children.

Suburban children excelled the performance of the other two groups from first grade through fifth, but the acquisition of a high level of understanding for most of the terms presented did not occur by fifth grade.

Children need a basic understanding of the vocabulary of the work world if they are to comprehend other work-related information important to their vocational development, and these results indicated that they are not achieving this needed

understanding.

Which occupations do children consider important and desirable and which ones do they consider not so desirable? From first grade, children begin approximating adult opinions as to the importance of occupations. According to the National Opinion Research Corporation (NORC) survey the doctor and the dentist are included in the highly-regarded occupations by adults. Children from first grade through fifth rank them similarly. Children replace the professor (highly ranked by adults) with the policeman as the third member of the high category. A substantial number of children at all levels were not familiar with the occupation of professor.

The occupations included in this section of the CCI considered of lesser importance by adults (NORC survey) include miner, janitor, and garbage collector. Children agreed with adults regarding the janitor and garbage collector but replaced the miner with the musician in an orchestra. This discrepancy may have been due to 1.) the ambiguity of the pictures of these occupations and/or 2.) the lack of knowledge on the children's part about the miner and musician. In some of their comments children implied that miners get gold and are consequently not poor. They also seemed to relate the musician to pupils in the local school bands and think that their activities are perhaps fun but not important work.

Children in elementary schools are in the process of defining and formulating vocational values and choices. Career education and guidance is necessary to aid them in their interests and attitudes from early childhood through retirement.

The impact that you, the elementary counselor, will have on career education in the elementary school is dependent upon you -- the challenge is here!

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